DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 041 PS 024 806

AUTHOR Taylor, Barbara Lynn
TITLE The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents. Successful Parenting. Facilitator's Guide. Part Seven.
PUB DATE Jul 96
NOTE 65p.; For the workbook, see ED 390 006. For Facilitator's Guides, parts 1-4, see ED 390 007 and for parts 5 and 6, see PS 024 805 and PS 024 806. Videos which accompany guides are not available from EDRS.
AVAILABLE FROM Richards and Taylor Productions, P.O. Box 11851, Winston-Salem, NC 27116; phone: 800-544-2219; fax: 910-712-0030 (Video, $39.95).
PUB TYPE Audiovisual/Non-Print Materials (100) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Births to Single Women; Child Custody; Childhood Attitudes; Childhood Needs; *Child Rearing; Children; Death; Divorce; Emotional Adjustment; *One Parent Family; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; Parent Materials
IDENTIFIERS Parent Needs

ABSTRACT

Intended for parent educators, this facilitator's guide outlines a workshop for single parents to help them meet the challenges of raising children alone. The guide first presents frameworks for a 1- or 2-hour workshop and for an 8-session workshop. The remainder of the guide corresponds to a 28-minute companion video, presenting questions for discussion prior to and after viewing the video, and discussion points geared to specific parts of the video. Topics covered are: (1) ways single families happen; (2) problems found in each single-family situation; (3) suggestions for parents who are separated or divorced; (4) some serious problems for divorced or separated parents; (5) problems divorced people have that go beyond their role as parents; (6) ideas that should help noncustodial parents; (7) problems common to most single parents, regardless of their circumstances; (8) parenting practices all parents should keep in mind; (9) dating; (10) remarriage; (11) advantages of being a single parent; (12) what makes a single parent home hard for the children; (13) what kids miss by not living with the other parent too; (14) how single parent children sometimes feel; (15) research comparing children from single-parent families to those from two-parent families; and (16) advice from the single parents appearing in the video. A personal plan worksheet and workshop handouts are appended. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 402 041

Successful Parenting

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Part Seven:

The Single Parent Family:

A Challenge For Parents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara Lynn Taylor
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PS 021808

Facilitator's Guide

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Successful Parenting

Hi!

As a teacher and school counselor for 20 years, I worked with children, their teachers, and their parents or guardians. I'm convinced that children want to succeed and that parents and guardians do try to do a good job of raising their children. I believe that parenting is the ***toughest job*** *there is, and yet, it is the one for which we get very little training. I want to change that.*

Successful Parenting *has been produced to accomplish that goal. "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents" and its companion video, "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children" are part of the* **Successful Parenting** *series. Each comes with a facilitator's guide.*

Also in the series is my "Heart of Parenting" package, consisting of "Self-Esteem is the Key," "Communication is Crucial," and "Discipline Makes the Difference," each of which comes with a facilitator's guide and a user's guide. There is also a workbook for parents on those three subjects. It parallels the videos and is written at a third to fourth grade reading level.

This "Heart of Parenting" package is also available for Spanish-speaking parents, with the tapes and the user's guides in Spanish and the facilitator's guide in English.

Also available are the companion tapes, "School Success Takes Teamwork: The Basics" and "School Success Takes Teamwork: Taming the Homework Monster."

I am delighted that you have selected my materials to use in your workshop for parents of single parent families. It is my fervent hope that you and the parents attending your workshop will view this video, enjoy it, discuss it, learn from it, apply what has been learned, and then tell others about it. I hope that all of the families touched by this workshop will be happier and have fewer problems both now and in the future.

Barbara Lynn Taylor

Barbara Lynn Taylor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes to Facilitators.....1

Suggested Time Frames for Workshops.....2-4

Suggestions for the Facilitator.....5, 6

I. BEFORE VIEWING THE VIDEO.....7, 8

II. AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO.....9

Introductory Part.....10

Main Part

SECTION ONE-Ways Single Parent Families Happen.....11, 12

SECTION TWO-Problems Found in Each Situation.....13-17

SECTION THREE-Thirteen Quick Suggestions for Parents Who Are Separated or Divorced.....18-21

SECTION FOUR-Some Serious Problems for Divorced or Separated Parents.....22, 23

SECTION FIVE-Problems Divorced People Have That Aren't Just About Their Roles As Parents.....24

SECTION SIX-Ideas That Should Help Non-Custodial Parents.....25-27

SECTION SEVEN-Problems Common to Most Single Parents, Regardless of How They Came to Be Single.....28-30

SECTION EIGHT-Parenting Practices All Parents Should Keep in Mind.....31-33

SECTION NINE-What About the Dating Game?.....34, 35

SECTION TEN-The Second Time Around---Remarriage.....36

SECTION ELEVEN-Advantages of Being a Single Parent.....37, 38

SECTION TWELVE-What's Hard For the Children in a Single Parent Home?.....39, 40

SECTION THIRTEEN-What Do Kids Miss by Not Living With the Other Parent Too?.....41

SECTION FOURTEEN-How Single Parent Children Sometimes Feel.....42, 43

SECTION FIFTEEN-What Research Studies Say is Likely to Happen to Children from Single Parent Families When Compared to Children from Two-Parent Families.....44

SECTION SIXTEEN-Advice from the Single Parents in the Video.....45

III. CONCLUSION.....46

How to Order Tapes in the ***Successful Parenting*** *Series*.....47, 48

Closing Comments from Barbara Lynn Taylor.....49

APPENDIX

"My Personal Plan" worksheet.....50

"Thirteen Quick Suggestions for Parents Who Are Separated or Divorced" handout.....51

"Ideas That Should Help Non-Custodial Parents" handout.....52

"What's Hard for the Children in a Single Parent Home?" handout.....53

"How Single Parent Children Sometimes Feel" handout.....54

"What Research Studies Say is Likely to Happen to Children from Single Parent Families Compared To What is Likely to Happen to Children From Two-Parent Families" handout.....55

"Advice from the Single Parents in the Video" handout.....56

Many thanks to the following
who,
while reading this manuscript,
not only found my errors,
but also shared their wisdom
and helped me gain valuable new perspective.

Dr. John Gannon
Robin Richards
Cindy Ross
Kevin Ross
Dr. Fran Troutman

Notes to Facilitators

Please use your own words, tailor the discussion to the parents you're working with, and put lots of YOU into it. That's what will make your workshop special!

- *"Stage" directions and suggestions for your benefit will be shown in this typestyle.*
- **Things for you to say or paraphrase will be in this type-style.**
- Information will appear in this typestyle.

****

What you need to conduct a workshop

1. *The videotape "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents." (This is copyrighted and may not be duplicated.)*
2. *A copy of each of the handouts found on pages 50-56 in this Facilitator's Guide for each child. (Please do duplicate these.)*
3. *A pencil for each participant.*
4. *This Facilitator's Guide.*
5. *A chalkboard and chalk or flip chart and markers. (Optional)*
6. *Energy, enthusiasm, and patience.*

Suggested time frame for a one-or a two-hour workshop:

• *Do Part I, "Before Viewing the Video"*	*5 minutes*
• *Distribute the handouts and urge participants to record their thoughts as the workshop progresses*	*5 minutes*
• *Show the video, "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents"*	*28 minutes*
• *Using this Facilitator's Guide, discuss The Introductory Part and the Main Part, using your judgment to determine which sections should be emphasized*	*17 minutes for a one-hour workshop*
	77 minutes for a two-hour workshop
• *Summarize, go over "My Personal Plan," set personal goals, make commitments*	*5 minutes*

Suggested time frame for an eight-class workshop:
(One hour each)

Class 1	• *Do "Before Viewing the Video"*	*10 minutes*
	• *Watch the video*	*28 minutes*
	• *Do "From the Introductory Part"*	*22 minutes*
Class 2	• *SECTION ONE-Ways Single Parent Families Happen*	*30 minutes*
	• *SECTION TWO-Problems Found In Each Situation*	*30 minutes*
Class 3	• *SECTION THREE-Thirteen Quick Suggestions For Parents Who Are Separated or Divorced*	*30 minutes*
	• *SECTION FOUR-Some Serious Problems For Divorced or Separated Parents*	*30 minutes*
Class 4	• *SECTION FIVE-Problems Divorced People Have That Aren't Just About Their Roles As Parents*	*30 minutes*
	• *SECTION SIX-Ideas That Should Help Non-Custodial Parents*	*30 minutes*
Class 5	• *SECTION SEVEN-Problems Common To Most Single Parents, Regardless Of How They Came To Be Single*	*30 minutes*
	• *SECTION EIGHT-Parenting Practices All Parents Should Keep In Mind*	*30 minutes*

Class 6	• *SECTION NINE-What About The Dating Game?*	*20 minutes*
	• *SECTION TEN-The Second Time Around---Remarriage*	*20 minutes*
	• *SECTION ELEVEN-Advantages of Being A Single Parent*	*20 minutes*
Class 7	• *SECTION TWELVE-What's Hard For The Children In A Single Parent Home?*	*20 minutes*
	• *SECTION THIRTEEN-What Do Kids Miss By Not Living With The Other Parent Too?*	*20 minutes*
	• *SECTION FOURTEEN-How Single Parent Children Sometimes Feel*	*20 minutes*
Class 8	• *SECTION FIFTEEN-What Research Studies Say Is Likely To Happen To Children From Single Parent Families When Compared To Children From Two-Parent Families*	*25 minutes*
	• *SECTION SIXTEEN-Advice From The Single Parents In The Video*	*25 minutes*
	• *Do "Conclusion"*	*10 minutes*

Suggestions for the Facilitator

Welcome each of the parents in your workshop individually, if possible. Try to find out their names and something about why they came to the workshop. You may want to survey the group either one-at-a-time or after they gather, as to the names and ages of their children. This will help you personalize your comments later as you lead the discussions.

It is important that you know your audience and that you try to use words and ideas they can understand.

For each of us to feel safe as we tell what we think and feel, we need to be sure that nothing will be repeated outside this group. Before we begin, let's all agree on confidentiality in this group. *(You may want to define "CONFIDENTIALITY" as "WHAT'S SAID HERE STAYS HERE.")* **Okay?**

As you lead the discussions, keep in mind that you want to challenge the parents to think and to relate the ideas to their own situations. You don't want to put them on the spot or ask them to reveal personal information unless <u>they</u> want to.

Look for those outgoing, talkative members of your group. Involve them, and others are likely to follow.

Use the skill of <u>linking</u> to show the connection between the comments participants make. This strengthens the lesson and builds the self-esteem and confidence of the members of the group.

Some people are auditory learners and will "get it" from the words they hear from you, the soundtrack of the video, and the comments of the others present. Some are visual learners, so they will learn best from the pictures in the video, the handouts, and the words you write on a chalkboard or flipchart. Most people learn best when both modes are used, so they'll appreciate it if you use all techniques.

Remember, ***you don't have to answer every question that you're asked.*** *Often it's effective to toss it back to the group. When group members express ideas, be careful not to shoot them down. If you really think they're way off base, you may want to try saying something like, "Okay, could we also look at it like this....?"*

The intention of the next section, called "Before Viewing the Video," is to stimulate interest and to encourage your participants to watch the video with a purpose.

NOTES:

I. BEFORE VIEWING THE VIDEO

Okay, you're ready. Take a deep breath. Begin the discussion.

1. **When you were a child and a teenager, did you dream about how your future life would be?** *Discuss.* **When you pictured your home, did you have a spouse living with you?** *Discuss.* **Most people did. But now you are a single parent. How do you feel about that?** Sad, disappointed, like I failed, like I screwed up, desperate, exhausted, unloved, like I can't do anything right, relieved, okay, just fine.

2. **When you think about your friends and family, what percentage of them are in two-parent homes?** Officially, 70% of parents are married to each other. **One-half of marriages today end in divorce. Times sure have changed.**

3. **How would your grandmother have defined "family?"** Probably "a father, mother, and their children." **How do your parents define "family?"** Perhaps "people related to each other who live together." **How do you define "family?"** *Discuss.* **Did you know that the US Government definition of "family" is "people who live together." Just that. They might be related by blood or they might not. What a change! Our definition of "family" impacts our ideas and it impacts government funding.**

Get your copies of "My Personal Plan" from page 50 of the Appendix.

Here is a worksheet called, "My Personal Plan." I want you to write down ideas as you view the video and during the rest of the workshop. The left column is for those things you already do well and the right column is for the things you want to try.

As you watch the video, remember, nobody does it all right! Pat yourself on the back for those things you do well. If you hear a suggestion that sounds interesting, write it down and promise yourself to try it.

I have placed two seconds of black screen between the sections of this videotape so that you may stop it at various points, thus giving you some choices in the way you structure your workshop.
Here are some possibilities:

1. *Play the entire video at one time, then lead the discussion.*

2. *Play the first two minutes, stop the tape, discuss that part, play the remainder of the tape, and then discuss it.*

3. *Play the first two minutes, stop the tape, discuss that part, play the remaining parts one at a time, and lead a discussion between each one.*

Do what feels right to you.

So now, here is "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents." It lasts about 28 minutes.

While the video is showing, unobtrusively observe each person in your workshop. Make note of any signs of discomfort, identification, agreement, disagreement, or amusement, and who showed them. This information will be useful to you in leading the ensuing discussions.

NOTES:

II. AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO

Remind your group that, for them to get the most out of this workshop, they must be honest with themselves and with the other members of the group. Encourage them to be open in the discussion and to participate in the activities.

Be sure to listen carefully and be sensitive to their comments. Encourage your participants to communicate with each other.

Be aware that some of the statements made in the video will elicit disagreement. Disagreement is good. It usually leads to lively, informative, meaningful discussions ..... ***and that leads to learning!***

NOTES:

INTRODUCTORY PART

(The first 2 minutes of the video)

Incue: *Bride walking down aisle; narrator talking; music playing.*

Outcue: *Mother on blue couch with two young boys playing; Barbara Lynn Taylor talking.*

1. **We talked earlier about how times have changed with respect to families. Do you remember what the video said about how many of our children will live in a single parent home before they're 16? Yes, it was one half. That's a lot. And your children are part of that group.**

2. You probably didn't plan it that way, but that's the way it turned out. Now, what can you do to make it the best childhood possible for your child? *Discuss.*

3. **Have you ever heard someone say, "We're going to stay together for the sake of the children?"** *Discuss.* **George Bryan had some comments regarding two-parent homes and single parent homes. Do you remember what he said?** Single parent homes can be positive and nurturing.

4. **What is a family? It used to be father, mother, and the children. Now the governmental definition is, "people who live together."**

5. **Let's list the things we think it takes to make a <u>good</u> family.** *List ideas on the chalkboard or flipchart. Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

THE MAIN PART

(26 minutes)

Incue (Beginning): *A teenage girl looking at a pregnancy test; narrator talking*

Outcue (Ending): *Father and two sons climbing mountain into sunset; narrator talking; music playing.*

SECTION 1

Ways Single Parent Families Happen

Let's look at the ways single parent families happen. Let's list the ways the video mentioned. *List the ways on the chalkboard or on a flipchart.* **Can you think of any other ways?** *If your group comes up with others, list them on the chart too.*

Here is the information from the video:

a. **A never-married mother**-Most often these are teenagers. Most of the time they didn't mean to get pregnant but sometimes they wanted to. Maybe they knew the father and didn't want to get married or maybe they didn't know who he was. Maybe the father didn't want the responsibility and he left. Sometimes women who are older than teenagers get pregnant by mistake and decide to keep the child. **There are three and one-half million never-married mothers in the United States now. Do you know any never-married mothers and their children? What is it like for them and their kids?** *Discuss.*

b. **An older woman wanting a baby**-Some women thought they wanted to marry but either didn't find the right man or if they married, did not have children. Then they decided they wanted a baby even if it meant raising the baby themselves. Some never wanted to marry but still wanted a baby. **Have any of you ever known an older woman who had a baby alone? What was it like for that woman and her child?** *Discuss.*

11

c. **A single person adopting a baby**-The person might be a man or a woman and might be young or old. He/She might find the child in the United States or might go overseas to adopt the child. The child might be an infant or might be an older child. **Has anyone known of a family like this?** *Discuss.*

d. **A single family member might take over the parental duties**-It might be an aunt, uncle, grandmother, or grandfather. This happens if either parent doesn't want to raise the child, if either parent thinks the child would be better off with the family member, or if neither parent can raise the child because of poor health, involvement with drugs, military service, jail, or death. **Have you heard of a family like this?** *Discuss.*

e. **One parents dies and the other parent keeps the child**-A parent may die because of an accident, a sudden illness, suicide, or after he/she is sick for a long time. **Does anyone know of a situation where one parent died? What happened?**

f. **Parents separate and may later divorce**-This is the most common way that families become single parent families. **I'll bet lots of you know of parents who have separated and/or divorced.** *Discuss.*

Which way did you become a single parent family? *It would be good for them to see that they're not alone in how they became a single parent family, so you may want to take a poll by having them raise their hands. But you may feel that would not be comfortable for them. If so, just tell them to make note of which way fits them.*

What do you remember about when you first became a single parent? *Discuss.* **What was the hardest part? What helped the most?** *Discuss.* **What is the hardest part now?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 2

Problems Found in Each Situation

Now let's look at some of the problems unique to each of these situations.

1. NEVER-MARRIED MOM
    a. **What's difficult for a never-married mom?**
        1. The father's interest fades and he's gone.
        2. Worries about where to live, money, and childcare.
        3. Talking to the father.
        4 Answering questions about the father from the child.
        5. Not saying negative things when there have been big problems.
        6. Telling the truth about the father.
        7. The fact that they don't fit in with their friends anymore.
        (Does your group have some other ideas?)

    b. **What are the positives to being a never-married mom?**
        1. Make your own decisions.
        2. Schedule your own time.
        3. Build a stronger bond with the children.
        4. Having your child depend on you forces you to become responsible and independent. It may help you "get your life together."
        (Does your group have some other ideas?)

2. AN OLDER WOMAN WHO WANTS TO GIVE BIRTH
    a. The biggest problem unique to this group is social acceptance. **When you see an older woman and a baby, what do you think?** *Discuss.*

    b. *See if your group can come up with any positives unique to this group. Discuss. (Numbers 1, 2, and 3 from above may fit this group too.)*

3. A SINGLE PERSON ADOPTING

a. **What single people do you know who have adopted? How would you describe these people?** *Discuss.*

b. **How would you describe the children they adopted?** *Discuss.*

c. **What do you think about them adopting? Do you think it's good for the parent? Why or why not? Do you think it's good for the child? Why or why not?** *Discuss.*

d. **Under what circumstances would society have a hard time with a single person adopting? Do you agree or do you have a different point of view?** *Discuss.*

4. FAMILY MEMBERS TAKING OVER

a. **What are some of the reasons a family member would take over raising a child?**

1. Parents are too young.
2. Parents don't want to raise the child.
3. Parents think the family member would do a better job.
4. Parents are impaired because of alcohol or drugs.
5. Parents don't have enough money.
6. Parents are too sick.
7. Parents are serving in the military.
8. Parents die.

(Can your group come up with other reasons? Discuss.)

b. **Have any of you had any experience with any of those situations? If so, what's it like?** *Discuss.*

c. **What are some of the difficulties in having one of your family members raise your child?**

1. Different opinions about what's right.
2. Child is unsure about who is the authority figure.
3. Child doesn't know who should receive the Mother's Day or Father's Day card.
4. What the child does can hurt the feelings of the adults.
5. It's hard to know how or when to come back and take over being the parent again.

(Does your group have other ideas on hard parts? Discuss.)

d. **Who can share some good things about having a family member take over?**
   1. The child stays a part of your own family.
   2. If the parents are still living, they may feel comfortable knowing the relative was a good parent.
   3. The parents can visit when they want.
   4. Parents don't have to give the children up legally.

   (Can your group come up with any other ideas? Discuss.)

5. A PARENT MAY DIE
   a. Things will never be the same again. That's hard to accept.

   b. **The first thing people do is deny that the person died. It all seems like a bad dream. Have any of you had that feeling about a death or maybe something else?** *Discuss.*

   c. **The most commonly-asked question is, "Why?". What is the answer?** There is no answer.

   d. **What is the right way to grieve?** There is no right way. Everyone does it differently. Some cry and some don't. Some get quiet and some get loud. Some want to be alone and some want to be with people. Some seem to get over it fairly quickly and some take a long time. **How long is too long? What should you do if you think your loved one has grieved too long and just isn't getting better?** *Discuss.*

   e. **People who have lost someone deal with a range of feelings. Do you remember what the video said the feelings were?** *Here is some information that will help you conduct this discussion.*

f. The feelings people have when someone dies:

1. **Sadness**-They miss the person and hate to think they'll never see him/her again.

2. **Anger**-Sometimes they actually get angry at the person for dying. That may seem kind of strange, but it's true. They don't know how they'll make it without them and they feel deserted. They feel angry because it seems unfair and they feel abandoned by the parent who died.

3. **Fear**-They're afraid that other people they love will die and will leave them too.

4. **Guilt**-They feel guilty because they might have had a fight with the person who died and they might think the fight was their fault. They might not have had a chance to say they were sorry. They may wish they had been nicer to the parent who died. Young children sometimes say that they wish that a parent was dead, and then if it happens, they believe they caused it.

What can we do about these uncomfortable feelings? *Brainstorm.* Ideas to help children are: talk to the remaining parent, talk to a brother or sister, talk to a grandparent, talk to a friend, talk to a counselor or minister, priest, or rabbi, draw pictures, write stories, exercise, get involved in activities, focus on friends and their problems, focus on the positive and talk about the good times.

Will any of those strategies work to help the adult who has lost a spouse? *Discuss.*

6. SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

a. **First, let's just be sure we're straight on the meanings of those two words. Can anyone tell us what they mean?** Separation is just moving to different places to live. Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage. Not all separations end in divorce.

b. **Do you think separations and divorces are harder on the parents or on the children?** *Discuss.*

c. **What are some things the video mentioned that parents should do to make it better for them and their children?**
   1. Communicate openly about what's best for the children.
   2. Continue to let the children know that they are still loved.
   3. What else can your group think of? We'll discuss more in the next section of the video.

d. **Let's talk about custody arrangements. Those of you who are divorced: What custody arrangements do you have? What do you like about it for yourself? For your child?** *Discuss.* **What don't you like about it for yourself? For your child?** *Discuss.*

e. **What about money?????** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 3

Thirteen Quick Suggestions for Parents Who Are Separated or Divorced

You may wish to use the handout on page 51 in the Appendix.

1. **Your child needs to be reassured about your love. Why would you need to do that? How can you do that? How often should you do that? For how long should you do that?** *Discuss.*

This would be a good place for a role play. Ask for two volunteers. Let them decide who will be the child and who will be the parent. Prompt the child that he/she is feeling that this parent doesn't love him/her any more.

2. **Assure the child that he/she was not to blame for the divorce. Children often think they are to blame for a separation or divorce. Do you think they can be? Why is it bad for them to think that they are? Has your child ever told you that he/she thinks he/she is to blame? What did you say? Were you satisfied with your answer? Is there something else you could have said? If children caused a divorce, then it follows that they should be able to fix it. Do you think they can? What can you say to them?** *Discuss.*

This would also be a good place for a role play. Ask for two volunteers. Let them decide who will be the child and who will be the parent. Prompt the child that he/she believes he/she caused the divorce and thinks he/she can put the marriage back together again.

3. **Answer questions simply and honestly to keep trust. What questions have your children asked you that had to do with your divorce? Were they hard to answer? Why should we be sure to answer them honestly? Why do you think the video said "simply" as well?** Because sometimes we (especially moms) tend to go on and on and on. They don't want or need to hear all that.

4. **You will want to help your child deal with normal anger. "Normal anger?" Is anger normal? Yes, it is. Everyone---man, woman, child, single parent family members, intact family members, <u>everyone</u> needs to learn how to deal with it. The children of divorced parents might have some specific issues to be angry about.**

5. **Be sure to keep your promises. Why is it important to keep promises to a child?** So they'll trust and believe in <u>you</u> and so they'll learn to trust the world in general. **What kinds of promises do parents make?** I'll be there at 6:00 on Wednesday, I'll buy you a new dress, I won't drink before coming to get you, I'll be at Grandma's for Christmas this year etc. **What other promises have you made? Were they hard to keep? Did you see the disappointment in their eyes? Ouch!**

6. **Be sure to come on time to pick them up. This is an example of a promise as explained above. It's particularly bad because it doesn't take long before they don't believe you anymore. As a defense, they start to say they don't care if you come or not. Then your relationship goes downhill.**

7. **Have the kids ready when the other parent arrives. Whether you are the custodial or non-custodial parent, it is important to have the kids ready. Why?** It shows cooperation and respect for your "ex" which should set a more comfortable tone between you. Also, it puts you in a good light with the children because it shows you're doing the right thing. If you don't, you turn out to be the "bad guy."

8. **Don't use the child to send messages. That's not fair and you're probably playing games to make yourself look better than the other parent. It's important to be mature and straightforward in your communications with your "ex." Use the phone if possible or write notes, or find time to talk with your "ex" yourself. What harm can it do the children?** It puts them in the middle. They feel loyalty to both of you. These messages are probably packed with emotion. **You need to be the grown-ups and handle it yourselves. What do you think about that?** *Discuss.*

9. **Don't talk to the child about the money the other parent owes. Although in some families the children know everything about the family finances, most experts agree that it's best if the child doesn't know. It may cause anxiety. They may grow up too soon, missing out on the developmental needs of childhood. That may mean they don't mature properly into well-adjusted adults. Another reason not to discuss the money the other parent owes is that your effort to get the money may backfire because you embarrassed the other parent and made him/her angry and then unwilling to pay. Also, your efforts to make the other parent look bad may backfire because the child may side with the other parent, making you look greedy. How and when do you handle money problems???** Privately.

10. **Don't ask your child about the dates the other parent had. First ask yourself: "Why do I want to know?" Am I just curious? Am I jealous? Am I embarrassed? Am I worried about the influence on my child? What else could be going on here?** *Discuss.* **Why would it be bad for your child?** It puts the child in the middle. It makes them choose where to put their loyalty. It may encourage them to lie. It may encourage them to exploit the emotional needs that both of you have. In any case, it's uncomfortable for the child and it may really hurt.

11. **If your children complain that there are things they're allowed to do at the other parent's home, but they're not permitted to do at yours, just calmly say, "That's the way it works there, but this is the way it is here." What do you think? Could you say that and be natural? If not, what could you say?** *Discuss.*

12. **Don't become alarmed if your child threatens to go live with the other parent. He's/She's probably calling your bluff. If it's legally proper, you may want to let him/her try it. 90% return to the first custodial parent. What do you think? Could you do that? That means a one in ten chance the child wouldn't return to you. Would you take that risk? Could it ever be better for your child to live with the other parent? Think of the strength it would take to let them go. Some people might define that as love.** *Discuss.*

13. **Don't encourage your child's fantasies that you will get back together if you have no intentions of doing so. Building up hope and then dashing it is tough on a kid. If you know it's over, say so and then live that way.**

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 4

Some Serious Problems for Divorced or Separated Parents

1. **The parent ordered to pay child support may refuse to do so. Have any of you had first hand experience with an "ex" who won't pay? Could you tell us about it?** *Discuss.*

There were two laws mentioned in the video that try to help with this problem. One was the Child Support Recovery Act of 1992. This law makes it a federal offense for parents to neglect support payments. Has this law helped you at all? *Discuss.*

The second law was the Mandatory Income Withholding Law, passed in January, 1994. It states that if the parent ordered to pay child support gets a regular paycheck from anywhere, child support payments can be automatically taken out. Has that law helped anyone here? *Discuss.*

Barbara Lynn Taylor said that for the sake of themselves and their children, parents should fight for child support money. Do you think that comment is realistic? Do they fight? How does someone fight for child support money? What happens if they do? *Discuss.*

2. **Dr. Edward DeWindt-Robson talked about a concept called "parent alienation." That's what happens when one parent tries to win a child over by finding various ways to criticize the other parent. The parent tries to drive a wedge between the child and the other parent and thus undermine the relationship. The parent may be trying to win the child over to his/her side to get a more secure relationship with the child. It's easy to see how that can be a problem while the child is still young. It hurts and confuses the child, and it damages the child's relationships with both parents. It also may become a problem in the future. The child may believe everything the manipulating parent has said and may go on believing it as an adult. That may mean the child misses out on honest and close relationships with both parents as an adult.**

Do any of you think that has been going on with you? *Discuss.*

3. **The video showed the most devastating situation of all; when one parent runs away with, or kidnaps the children. We've all seen or heard the heart wrenching stories of children taken away and kept hidden for years. Have any of you heard first-hand of a situation like that? Would you be willing to share?** *Discuss. Be very sensitive here!*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 5

Problems Divorced People Have
That Aren't Just About Their Roles as Parents

1. **Finding that you misplaced your trust and your love can make you doubt yourself, so, you may have to learn to trust and love all over again. That can be rough, and you may have to go through one or two new relationships before one feels right. Anyone have any experience here?** *Discuss.*

2. **Building a career is tough, especially when the children get sick. For a single parent, one of the most anxiety-producing phrases on a workday is, "Mommy, I don't feel good." How can you be a dedicated, loyal, responsible employee and a loving, caring, dutiful mom or dad at the same time? Have any of you found good ways to deal with this problem?** *Discuss.*

3. **Do you think it's common for single parents to feel stressed out?** *Discuss.* **Does being stressed out mean that there's something bad about them? Does it mean they are not good people?** No, it means they are under a lot of stress and they may need some help handling it. **What suggestions would you have for a single person who's really stressed out?** *Discuss.*

4. **Social support systems can be very helpful. What support systems have you found?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 6

Ideas That Should Help Non-Custodial Parents

You may want to use the handout on page 52 in the Appendix.

1. Don't give up, even if your "ex" makes it difficult. In what ways can an "ex" make it difficult? Refusing to let you see the children, telling the children lies about you, telling family and friends lies about you, blaming you for everything that goes wrong, not having the children there when you come to get them, refusing to let the kids talk to you on the phone, and hiding the mail you send the kids. **What other ways can an "ex" make it hard on the non-custodial parent?** *Discuss.*

2. Has the non-custodial parent (whether it be you or your "ex") ever forgotten to go to an event that was important to your children? What happened? *Discuss.* **When you're not living with children day in and day out, it's hard to keep up with what's going on in their lives. One good idea is to mark a calendar with special dates like birthdays, holidays, the last day of school, graduation, sports games, appointments, or any other events that are meaningful to your child. That way, the children will know that they are important, plus, you're likely to make every effort to be there. Do any of you have any other systems that work? Anyone want to share a story about this?** *Discuss.*

3. What forms of communication can you use to keep in touch with your children? Write letters, send photographs, send postcards, make phone calls, or make audiotapes. **In today's high tech world, there are even other options for some people: send faxes, make videos, or send e-mail. How does the non-custodial parent in your situation communicate with the children? Could he/she do a better job? Why is that important?** *Discuss.*

4. Have you ever heard of a non-custodial parent who really laid on the fancy stuff and lots of gifts when the child came to visit? Remember the man in the video with all the wrapped-up boxes? What are the negative things that happen if one parent showers the children with lots of gifts?

a. The parent spends too much money.
b. The child comes to expect it.
c. The relationship between the child and that parent becomes phony. Not only is it not real when the child is young, but it won't be when they're both adults either. What if the parent can no longer play Santa Claus in later life? If that's what the relationship was based on, there will be nothing else.
d. The child may be impressed with material things and not learn to look for other signs that someone really cares. The parent is supposed to be a good role model for sincere relationships. That may be a problem later in life when potential mates overdo the gifts and a relationship is based on material things instead of sincere love and caring. That's a relationship headed for trouble.
e. The parents may start a competition that can get out of hand. *(Can your group think of any other reasons not to shower your child with gifts?)*

5. It's tempting to show off when we have money. What happens if the non-custodial parent tells or shows the children that he/she has lots of money? Will the children be impressed? Yes, they probably will. But then the children will probably start to wonder why that parent doesn't give more of the money to them or to the custodial parent. **What should you do if you have more money than the custodial parent?** *Discuss.*

6. What about the family of your "ex"? Do you keep in touch with them? How often? Over the holidays? In the summer? On weekends? *Discuss.* **What are some of the problems with that?** They may live some distance away, they may not have ever liked you, they may not like the children, they may disapprove of your methods of raising children, they may disapprove of your new love interest, it may not feel right without the "ex" there, or the "ex" wants to be there too, and that definitely doesn't feel right **or ...what else???** *Discuss.*

7. **What gifts have you given your children for birthdays or for the holidays? Are they the kinds of gifts that will be forgotten one week later?** *Discuss.* **It's a good idea to give something that will keep reminding the child of the parent. Can you think of any such gifts?** A watch, a magazine subscription, an engraved pen, anything engraved, a poster or painting they'll look at often, a backpack for school, a purse, a wallet with pictures, a photo album, etc. *(Can your group come up with any other ideas?) Discuss.*

8. **Most children can adapt to two different styles in two different homes as long as each is reasonable and applied consistently and fairly. What has your experience been in this area?** *Discuss.* **If both parents can agree on basically the same rules and the same consequences, it should be easier on everyone. Can two parents always agree on what method of discipline should be used?** No. In fact, that may have been a big part of why they split up. Also, most parents need to change their methods from time to time because nothing works for a long time. So, it may be hard to coordinate discipline styles, but it's worth trying.

9. **The video suggested that you write a love note and put it in your child's backpack. Does that sound like something only a mother would do? Why would a father do that?** It provides a pleasant surprise, it keeps you in touch, it shows the child that the father was thinking about him/her, it tells the child that the father does love him/her, and it's kind of fun and playful...why not???

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 7

Problems Common to Most Single Parents, Regardless of How They Came to Be Single

1. **What do you think is typically the biggest problem for single parents?** Right! Money! **In today's society, it takes two incomes for families to live basically the same way that the baby-boomers lived with one wage-earner. So, what happens when you only have one wage-earner per household?** *Discuss.* It's tight! **Who can give some examples of how tight it can get?** *Suggest you try to be extra sensitive here.* Rent, house payments, food, diapers, baby food, light bill, phone bill, clothes, school, extra money, etc.

2. **Has anyone here been like that older woman who said that there were plenty of times when she didn't know where her next meal was coming from?** *Discuss.*

3. What about the issue that the teenage mother raised about earning minimum wage and spending half of it on child care? Is that realistic? How does someone succeed in those circumstances? *Discuss.*

4. Are you embarrassed to shop at a consignment shop or a garage sale? Anyone gotten any great bargains? Do you think it's a good idea? *Discuss.*

5. How many of you are exhausted most of the time? Do you think that most single parents are? *Discuss.*

6. Do you remember the lady lying on the bed crying? Have you ever felt like doing that? Have you ever done that? What was the reason? *Discuss.*

7. In the video, there was a teenage girl who said that she never knew how hard it was to take care of a child. She said she hardly had time to breathe and that she hadn't read a newspaper in five months. Do you think that teenagers have a good idea of the demands that are placed on a mother? *Discuss.*

8. Do you ever take a break from your children? Do you think it's a good idea? Why? *Discuss.* How do you arrange breaks? The video suggested trading off with another parent, using a senior citizen's organization, or using a church. Would those be realistic choices for you? Some parents feel guilty if they take a break from their children. Do you? *Discuss.*

9. Support networks are groups of people who are in a similar situation to yours and who get together with or without their children to help each other. Do you know of any support networks in this community for single parents or guardians? *Discuss. Try to bring out specifics in your community. Make it easy for your group members to find the support groups.*

The video suggested you look for friends, neighbors, or relatives. Another suggestion was Parents Without Partners. This is a group of single parents who get together from time to time to listen to speakers, to discuss issues in single parenting, to have fun on an adult level, and to have fun as families. Many families have benefited greatly by joining Parents Without Partners. Have you ever heard of this group? *Discuss.*

10. Oftentimes, custodial parents have been home with the children and are not trained to go into the workforce. So, before they can get a job, they must get some training of some kind. They often go back to school. That means child care. That also means that the parent needs time to study, and that can be tricky with children. Have any of you dealt with being a single parent trying to study? What was it like? *Discuss.*

11. **One concern that many single parents have is that their children who are a different sex than they are will have a hard time knowing how they should act if they don't have someone to imitate. They are afraid that without appropriate role models, their children will have trouble with their sexual identity. Studies have shown that this can be true. Big Brothers Big Sisters is an organization which matches up children of single parents with an older person of their own sex. The "Bigs" (brothers or sisters) and the "Littles" (brothers or sisters) spend time together doing fun things, talking, helping each other, and generally just getting to know each other. It's a wonderful organization, and it can be a great help to the children of single parent families. Have you heard of it?** *Discuss.*

12. **There are so many papers parents need to keep track of. Can you think of some important papers you need to take care of?** Divorce papers, insurance papers, warranties and guarantees, birth certificates, children's health records, report cards....and, **what else can you think of? What are some good things to do with them? Could you find them easily if you needed them?** *Discuss.*

13. **Single parents go through a lot of feelings such as anger, frustration, guilt, and loneliness, and may have no one to help them. What do you do when you feel angry?** *Discuss.* **When you feel frustrated?** *Discuss.* **When you feel guilty?** *Discuss.* **When you feel lonely?** *Discuss.*

14. **A major concern of single parents and their children is what will happen if the remaining parent dies. Single parents need to take care of that and be sure the children know enough about those arrangements to make them feel secure. What kinds of arrangements can be made?** Grandparents, aunts, uncles, God-parents, neighbors...**what else?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 8

Parenting Practices All Parents Should Keep in Mind

1. **Have you ever stopped to figure out how many minutes per day you spend with your children? No, not yelling at them or even telling them what to do. It only counts if they are talking to you or you two are doing something together. The video said that research has shown that kids and parents spend about three minutes of meaningful conversation a day. There are one thousand, four hundred, forty minutes in a day. So, that means we are choosing to do other things for one thousand, four hundred, thirty-seven minutes per day. Don't our kids deserve better than that? And, think of what we're missing! They really can be enjoyable, charming creatures! Let's brainstorm the ways we do spend all those minutes:** working our jobs, paying bills, handling mail, cleaning, laundry, cooking, mending, ironing, mowing the lawn, repairs, shopping, keeping records(including photographs), driving children places, and what else??? *Discuss.*

2. **Why is it important to take a special interest in your child's school?** *(See another title in the Successful Parenting series, "School Success Takes Teamwork: The Basics.")* **Let's list some reasons:**

a. It shows your children you care about their world and that it is a worthwhile place.
b. It helps you see what they're experiencing so you can help them better.
c. You can see where you could offer some help to make the school better such as with facilities, materials, equipment, organization, and attractiveness.
d. It shows your children that you value education and that spills over to their attitude about school and doing schoolwork.
e. It will probably bring you and your children closer.

3. **When we were kids, there were no such things as "latchkey kids." Today there are lots of them. Do you know what they are?** They are children who come home after school to an empty house and who take care of themselves and perhaps brothers or sisters. **Why do we have them now?** Mostly because parents are working jobs that extend past the time that kids get home from school. **Here are some safe latchkey practices that all kids who spend time alone in the home should know.**

a. **Lock the door when you come in and never open it unless you are sure it is an adult you know very well and who has been approved by your parent. Only have friends in if you and your parent have agreed that it's okay.**

b. **If you have an answering machine, wait until you can hear who it is before picking it up. Only answer it if it is your parent or a very close relative or family friend who has been approved by your parent. If you do not have an answering machine or if you should answer the phone by mistake, never reveal that you are home alone. If the caller asks for your parent, hesitate, then come back and say, "I'm sorry, he/she can't come to the phone right now. May I take a message so he/she can call you back?" If the person gives you a message, you may want to call your parent to tell him/her. It depends on what your parent has told you to do.**

c. **Discuss with your parent what cooking you are allowed to do. Some children are not allowed to use any electrical appliance such as stoves, ovens, microwaves, toaster ovens, power tools, etc.**

d. **Be sure that you know the emergency numbers in your community. In many places, the emergency number for fire or police is 911. You should also know your doctor's number and your dentist's number. Post those and the numbers of your parents and other relatives near the phone in case you need them.**

e. **What other rules does your family have for latchkey kids? Is there anything that's especially important in this community?**

4. **One of the hardest tasks for working people who have the main responsibility for children is to balance their time between their work, their housework, and their children. Does anyone have some tales to tell in this department? Raise your hand if you feel you're doing a good job balancing those three things.** *React to how many raise their hands.* **Wait a minute! Is there another factor we didn't mention? Anyone know what it is? What about ourselves? Where is the time for exercise, sleep, time alone, time with friends, reading, television, and so forth? Is that hard to find as a single parent? Impossible? What can you do about that?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 9

What About the Dating Game?

1. **What should you do before you start dating?**
   a. Decide if you're really ready and think about why you're doing this.
   b. Talk with your child. Say something like this: "You know how you like your friends, Josh and Jeremy? Well, I need friends just like you do. I want friends who are women and friends who are men. I still enjoy your company and I always will. That time is different and special. I do not want to replace your father. He will always be your father."

2. **Why is a parent's dating hard on a child?**
   a. It dashes the hope that the parents will get back together.
   b. The child may feel loyalty to the absent parent and may therefore think you're doing something wrong.
   c. When you leave for a date, your child may feel that you are abandoning him/her just like the other parent might have done.
   d. The child may feel jealous of your date who gets to have fun with you.
   e. Your child used to be your main focus and now he/she has to share you with someone else. Your child may try to find ways to get your attention back.
   f. Depending on the age of your child, he/she may have a very hard time picturing you in a romantic relationship with someone new.

3. **What are some "words of wisdom" for the parent starting to date?**
   a. Understand that the children might be quite difficult when you first start. They might complain, argue, whine, cry, or even do sneaky things such as try to make the date look bad. Use lots of patience.
   b. Understand that the children may need a little time to get used to the new situation.
   c. Be careful about having the children call the new date "mommy" or "daddy". It's hard on a child to enter a relationship that gets close and then have it stop. The video said not to let the child get too close unless you're sure it will be a long-term relationship.
   d. What about having a date spend the night? This is a values question. What do you think? *Discuss.*

4. **How can having a parent date help the children?**
   a. It might bring a new positive relationship into the family.
   b. The single parent might be much happier and that happiness spills over to the whole family.
   c. Any other ideas? *Discuss.*

5. **What if the children continue to be against the parent dating? Should the parent stop?** Good question. *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 10

The Second Time Around----Remarriage

1. **Do you remember the figures the video gave on how many divorced or widowed people remarry within 3 years of the end of their previous marriage?** 4 out of 5 (80%) men and 3 out of 4 (75%) women. **One problem with that is that it can take parents and children years more than that to get over a death or a break-up. So, you may still be adjusting when you enter into a new relationship. That could spell trouble. So, what do you do? If you love this new person and you want to get married, what do you do?** *Discuss.*

2. **Let's see if we can list some of the good reasons to remarry:** common interests, trust, and love. **What else?** *Discuss.*

3. **Let's see if we can list some of the bad reasons to remarry:** financial security, to give the children another parent, to cure loneliness, and to prove you're desirable. **What else?** *Discuss.*

4. **Since parents are creating a new family when they remarry, it is very important that they consider two areas:**

a. **Financés-Be sure you know your fiancé's philosophy about money and what his/her financial situation is now.**
b. **Discipline and management of children-This is the biggest challenge of second marriages and the biggest reason for second divorces. Talk with your fiancé about his/her beliefs about raising children. Perhaps more than talking, watch how your children and your fiance interact. Then you'll have a better idea what you're in for.** *Discuss.*

5. **Do you know any children who got very angry when their parents remarried?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 11

Advantages of Being a Single Parent

1. **Most two-parent families do argue, and some do it quite a lot. Whether because the mother never married, a parent died, or a couple divorces, oftentimes, the home is a much happier, less tense place after the parents are not together. Many people report that it is quite a relief to have the arguments over. Was it that way for you? How bad can arguments get?** *Discuss.*

2. **The children enjoy having two holidays and two birthdays. How do you handle that?** *Discuss.*

3. **One of the single parents on the video said that her children had to work for what they wanted so they became more responsible and independent. Children in single parent families usually have to help out more around the house, so they become more responsible. They probably have to grow-up more quickly than children in two-parent homes. Is that good for a child?** *Discuss.*

4. **As a single parent, doing everything yourself, you do learn to depend on yourself. You build confidence that spills over into every part of your life. If I can do that, I can do anything. Do you think that parents in two-parent families depend on each other and therefore don't learn to do some things? For instance, most (note I didn't say all!) women in a two-parent home would not try to fix the lawnmower or build a fence. That is more likely to be the husband's department. By the same token, most (and note I did not say all!) husbands would be unlikely to do the mending or the cake decorating. A single parent has to do it all if it's to get done, and that leads to confidence. Do you agree with that?** *Discuss. Lead a discussion about what are traditionally male and female tasks around the house and how things changed with respect to these tasks when the parents in your group became single parents.*

5. **How about the older woman who stated, "I'm an independent woman." She sounded rather pleased and proud, didn't she?** *Discuss.*

6. **Sometimes, in the rush of day-to-day living in two-parent families, one parent spends so much time on the job that he/she hardly sees the children. He/she doesn't participate much in the raising of the children and, in so doing, he/she doesn't share in the joys to the extent that the other parent does.** *Discuss. You may want to tell this story.* **A young doctor was working 14-16 hours per day and was on the fast track. He was moving up the ladder and he had begun to make good money. But, he hardly knew his three young children. His wife did everything for the children. Then his wife suddenly died. It was a tragedy and a tremendous shock to everyone. The adjustment was long and difficult. Now, years later, that father reports that he feels a closeness to his children that he never would have felt. He never would have slowed down and placed a high priority on time with his children. Now he's grateful that he woke up.** *Any comments?*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 12

What's Hard for the Children in a Single Parent Home?

You may want to use the handout on page 53 in the Appendix.

What's hard for the children in a single parent home? *Here is your information to back up what the group members bring up.*

1. They often miss their other parent a lot.

2. Because they have less money than they used to, they might have to move into a less expensive neighborhood. That's not as nice and it's embarrassing.

3. If they have to move, they might have to change schools. That's tough socially, academically, and emotionally.

4. If they have to change schools, they might lose friends.

5. They might have to do more chores to help the single parent.

6. If they were used to coming home right after school and spending time at their home or in their neighborhood with friends, that might change if the parent or guardian has to work late. Then they either become latchkey kids or they might have to go to some after-school program. Either way, it's not the same as it used to be.

7. **How many of you have older children taking care of younger children while you are at work or doing something else important for the family? What kinds of things do the older children do?** *Brainstorm. Here are some ideas:* cook for them, change diapers, give them a bath, help them get dressed, and help them with homework. **Do you see any potential problems with that?** The responsibility may be too much too soon. The child loses the opportunity to be a child. The child doesn't get to "hang" with his/her friends, and that can cause unhappiness and resentment. Also, the child might start having problems in his/her life such as grades, friendships, substance abuse, etc. or there might be big problems when the child is an adult who never worked through certain developmental stages.

8. **The video showed us that, to a child in a family where there's not much money, being on a tight budget means that on your birthday you get a shirt instead of a basketball. Does that sound familiar? Have any of you given your child practical items instead of toys for birthdays or holidays because you knew they needed them and that's the only way you could afford them? Did your children understand?** *Discuss.* **How does it feel when your child opens a package and his/her face looks disappointed?** *Discuss.* **Do you have a choice?** *Discuss.*

9. **React to this: Sometimes Mom is too tired to hear about my day. True or not? Anything you can do about it?** *Discuss.*

10. **The desire to be "just like the other kids" is very strong in our children. Years ago, children were very embarrassed if their friends found out that they didn't have two parents living together. What do you find today? There certainly are more single parent families. Are kids more comfortable with it or are they still embarrassed?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 13

What Do Kids Miss By Not Living With the Other Parent Too?

1. **The single parent father told us that he was able to get the children up and ready for school, and he could help them with their homework, but he felt they missed the presence of a warm, nurturing female in the house. How many of you are single fathers? Do you agree with him? What can you do about that short of getting married again?** *Discuss.*

What about the women who are single parents? Do you think that your children miss the more macho, "rough and tumble" style that a dad might have? If so, what can you do about that? *Discuss.*

2. **Our teenage mother said she thought her children would miss having toys. Her message is symbolic of all the material things that single parent family children often don't have. It's not just toys. What other things will they not have?** Clothes, a bike, trips to places, pretty rooms, etc. **What can single parents do about that?** *Discuss.*

3. **They may not have positive role models. What do you think about that?** *Discuss.*

4. **Can your group think of anything else that single parent children miss?** *Discuss.*

SECTION 14

How Single Parent Children Sometimes Feel

You may wish to use the handout on page 54 in the Appendix.

Here are the quotes from the video. See if the parents can remember the scene in which it was said. Then try for some reaction.

1. **"If they can stop loving each other, maybe they'll stop loving me."** (Teenage girl looking at parents' prom picture and worried about her own security.)

2. **"I have felt like that (mad), like that (scared), like that (guilty), and like that (happy)."** (Nine-year-old looking at feelings chart and showing that she has had a normal range of feelings.)

3. **Older brother, "I wonder if I'll ever see him again." Younger brother, "I miss him already."** (Older and younger brothers in bed showing that they are sad and afraid of never seeing their father again.)

4. **"I really hope my parents get back together again!"** (Teenage girl showing the unending hope that children of separated and divorced families feel that their parents will get back together again someday.)

5. **"I hope mom can understand that I kinda like Dad's new girlfriend. But don't expect me to ever call her Mom!"** (Teenage boy showing mixed loyalty.)

6. **"I need some privacy!"** (Teenage boy shows his need for his own space.)

7. Children want and need the security of rules. They also need for you to be extra reliable. Keep your promises! (Teenage girl trying to talk her mother into new rules.)

8. Children may show you in many ways that they are having trouble dealing with the changes in their lives: school problems, fatigue, drug or alcohol problems, eating problems, unusual displays of anger, mysterious aches and pains, or insomnia. (Preteen in bed reading very late because she can't sleep.)

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 15

What Studies Say is Likely to Happen to Children from Single Parent Families Compared to What is Likely to Happen to Children From Two-Parent Families

Here is the list from the video. Use it as a reference as you lead a discussion. Encourage your group members to remember the items. You may wish to use the handout on page 55 in the Appendix.

1. Stay in school fewer years.
2. Get in more trouble with the law.
3. Have more trouble in relationships and more likely to divorce.
4. May have trouble with their sexual identity due to the absence of role models.
5. Have poorer physical and mental health.
6. Fail to reach their goals.
7. Use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs more.
8. Have less satisfying careers.
9. Have lower income.

This is pretty discouraging. Does that have to happen to your children? What are you going to do to make sure none of these do happen? *Discuss.*

SECTION 16

Advice from the Single Parents in the Video

These are exact quotes from the video. You may want to discuss some or all of them. It would be good to get the participants to make commitments to themselves, to the others in the group, and to you. You may wish to use the handout on page 56 in the Appendix.

1. "Attitude is everything. If you feel sorry for yourself, your kids are going to feel the same way, moping and having sad faces. But if you have a positive attitude, you feel good about life. That's definitely going to show up in your kids."

2. "What may look to be like a serious problem at one juncture, may work itself out very effectively and you may find that your worst fears don't materialize and that good comes out of even the worst situation."

3. "You have to get involved in other activities where there are other people who might have something to share about what you're concerned with at that time."

4. "No matter what's said or what's done, she will always be his mother. And he will always have to respect her no matter what."

5. "Don't expect 'em to grow up too fast. Don't make 'em the man of the house or the lady of the house. Just let them be kids."

6. "Always tell the truth to the children. Be very honest with them about the situation. And always tell the truth about their mother, so we can discuss it and face it together."

7. "Always have a positive attitude. Have positive thoughts. Give the children positive things to think about themselves."

8. "Give them a lot of love!"

END OF VIDEOTAPE

III. CONCLUSION

Do this section based on the handout, "My Personal Plan."

1. **Now, we have talked about the video. Let's take a look at the worksheet you did while you watched the video. It was called "My Personal Plan."**

2. **First look on the left side of your paper, entitled, "Things I Already Do Well." For every item you listed, congratulate yourself.**

3. **Now look on the right side at the list of ideas you are going to try. We can't change everything all at once, so decide which one you think is the most important. Put a number 1 next to the most important one.**

4. **Rank the rest by numbering them 2, 3, 4, etc.**

5. **Plan to work on one new goal each week. Are you willing to make a promise to <u>yourself</u> today to do that?**

Would you also be willing to make a promise to <u>someone else</u> in this room? *(Pause)* **If you would, then do it now. Tell someone what you're going to work on. Telling someone else will help you to keep your promise to yourself.** *(Give the participants time to promise to someone else that they're going to work on a specific suggestion.)*

6. **When you get home, put your list where you will see it every day. Look at it every morning, decide on your goal for the day, and promise yourself to <u>keep on trying</u> to make things better for you and your family!**

Good luck!

Additional titles in the
SUCCESSFUL PARENTING
Series

****

Self-Esteem is the Key

Communication is Crucial

Discipline Makes the Difference

School Success Takes Teamwork:
The Basics

School Success Takes Teamwork:
Taming the Homework Monster

These videotapes can be viewed at home by the parents themselves or workshop using the videotapes can be offered to them.

The videos on self-esteem, communication, and discipline are also available in ***Spanish****.*

For more information or ***to order****, please contact:*

Richards & Taylor Productions
P.O. Box 11851
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27116
1-910-712-0080 1-800-544-2219
Fax-910-712-0030

Our videotapes are copyrighted and may not be duplicated.

Successful Parenting

Hello again!

Thank you again for using this videotape and this Facilitator's Guide. I hope you'll consider using other tapes, guides, and other materials in the SUCCESSFUL PARENTING *series.*

I welcome any comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding this tape, this Facilitator's Guide, or my approach and how they worked for you.

I'd also love to find out about the specific ways you've used my materials. Success stories keep me going!

I welcome ideas for future videos and workshops. Please do let me hear from you.

Write to me at:

Successful Parenting
3224 Linda Circle
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Call or fax me at:

910-748-8877

Thanks!

Barbara Lynn

APPENDIX

My Personal Plan

THINGS I ALREADY DO WELL	*THINGS I'M GOING TO TRY*

Thirteen Quick Suggestions for Parents Who Are Separated or Divorced

1. Reassure your child of your love.

2. Assure the child that he/she was not to blame for the divorce.

3. Answer questions simply and honestly to keep trust.

4. Help your child deal with normal anger.

5. Keep your promises.

6. Come on time.

7. Have the kids ready when the other parent arrives.

8. Don't use the child to send messages.

9. Don't talk to the child about the money the other parent owes.

10. Don't ask your child about the dates the other parent had.

11. If your children complain that there are things they're allowed to do at the other parent's home, but they're not permitted to do at yours, just calmly say, "That's the way it works there, but this is the way it is here."

12. Don't become alarmed if your child threatens to go live with the other parent.

13. Don't encourage your child's fantasies that you will get back together if you have no intentions of doing so.

Ideas That Should Help Non-Custodial Parents

1. Don't give up, even if your "ex" makes it hard.

2. Mark a calendar with special dates like birthdays, holidays, the last day of school, graduation, sports games, appointments, or any other events that are meaningful to your child. That way, the children will know that they are important, plus you're likely to make every effort to be there.

3. Use different forms of communication to keep in touch with your children.

4. Don't try to impress your child with fancy food or other things, and don't shower the child with gifts just to try to win him/her over.

5. Don't show off when you have some money.

6. Try to keep up with your "ex's" family.

7. It's a good idea to give gifts that will keep reminding the child of you.

8. It may be hard to coordinate discipline styles between you and your "ex", but it's worth trying.

9. Write a love note and put it in your child's backpack.

What's Hard for the Children in a Single Parent Home?

1. They often miss their other parent a lot.

2. Because they have less money than they used to, they might have to move into a less expensive neighborhood. That's not as nice, and it could be embarrassing.

3. If they have to move, they might have to change schools. That's tough socially and academically.

4. If they have to change schools, they might lose friends.

5. They might have to do more chores to help the single parent.

6. They might become latchkey kids, or they might have to go to some after-school program. Either way, it's not the same as it used to be.

7. Older children often take care of younger children while the parent is at work. That responsibility may be too much too soon. The child loses the opportunity to be a child. The child doesn't get to "hang" with his/her friends, and that can cause unhappiness and resentment.

8. To a child in a family where there's not much money, being on a tight budget means that on your birthday you get practical items instead of fun items.

9. Children may think, "Sometimes Mom is too tired to hear about my day."

10. The desire to be "just like the other kids" is very strong in our children. There certainly are more single parent families today than there used to be. Are kids still embarrassed to live in a single parent family?

How Single Parent Children Sometimes Feel

1. "If they can stop loving each other, maybe they'll stop loving me." (Worried about their own security.)

2. "I have felt like that (mad), like that (scared), like that (guilty), and like that (happy)." (Normal range of feelings.)

3. Older brother, "I wonder if I'll ever see him again." Younger brother, "I miss him already." (Sad and afraid of never seeing his father again.)

4. "I really hope my parents get back together again!" (Unending hope for parents to get back together.)

5. "I hope Mom can understand that I kinda like Dad's new girlfriend. But don't expect me to ever call her Mom!" (Mixed loyalty.)

6. "I need some privacy!" (Teenager's need for his own space.)

7. Children want and need the security of rules. They also need you to be extra reliable. Keep your promises! (Insecurity.)

8. Children may show you in many ways that they are having trouble dealing with the changes in their lives: school problems, fatigue, drug or alcohol problems, eating problems, unusual displays of anger, mysterious aches and pains, or insomnia. (Signs of problems.)

What Research Studies Say is Likely to Happen to Children from Single Parent Families Compared to What is Likely to Happen to Children from Two-Parent Families

1. Stay in school fewer years.

2. Get in more trouble with the law.

3. Have more trouble in relationships and more likely to divorce.

4. May have trouble with their sexual identity due to an absence of role models.

5. Have poorer physical and mental health.

6. Fail to reach their goals.

7. Use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs more.

8. Have less satisfying careers.

9. Have lower income.

Advice From the Single Parents in the Video

These are exact quotes from the people in the video.

1. "Attitude is everything. If you feel sorry for yourself, your kids are going to feel the same way, moping and having sad faces. But if you have a positive attitude, you feel good about life, that's definitely going to show up in your kids."

2. "What may look to be like a serious problem at one juncture, may work itself out very effectively and you may find that your worst fears don't materialize and that good comes out of even the worst situation."

3. "You have to get involved in other activities where there are other people who might have something to share about what you're concerned with at that time."

4. "No matter what's said or what's done, she will always be his mother. He will always have to respect her no matter what."

5. "Don't expect them to grow up too fast. Don't make them the man of the house or the lady of the house. Just let them be kids."

6. "Always tell the truth to the children. Be very honest with them about the situation. And always tell the truth about their mother, so you can discuss it and face it together."

7. "Always have a positive attitude. Have positive thoughts. Give the children positive things to think about themselves."

8. "Give them a lot of love!"

Richards & Taylor Productions

Post Office Box 11851
Winston-Salem, NC 27116
(910) 712-0080
Fax (910) 712-0030
1-800-544-2219

BEST COPY AVAILABLE